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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 33rd MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 3 April 2001, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DESPOUY (Argentina)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS (agenda item 10) (continued)

(E/CN 4/2001/8, 10, 49-53, 54 and Add.1 and Corr.1, 55 and Add.1, 56, 57, 62 and Add.1-2, 123 and 148; E/CN.4/2001/NGO/1, 4, 14, 15, 26, 30, 58, 60, 63, 80, 82, 103-106, 108, 109, 125, 131, 148, 154, 166 and 186; E/CN.4/2000/33; E/CN.4/Sub.2/2000/13)

1. Ms. LITIN (Independent Expert), introducing her report on human rights and extreme poverty (E/CN.4/2001/54 and Add.1 and Corr.1), said that it was, in fact, an interim report. While member States had made real efforts, extreme poverty had not disappeared. However, more and more people were becoming involved in the struggle against poverty and that was encouraging.

2. She drew attention to paragraphs 25 to 34, which summarized the main comments received from States, international organizations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on her earlier recommendations, and noted that many States had adopted legislation establishing a guaranteed minimum income and others had engaged in direct dialogue with the poorest elements of their populations. All States had agreed on the need for specific measures targeted at poor and elderly women, and all NGOs had emphasized the importance of a world alliance against poverty. She also drew attention to the report of the Expert Seminar on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty (E/CN.4/2001/54/Add.1), adding that it had identified the need for new guiding principles.

3. She would continue evaluating the relationship between the eradication of extreme poverty and the promotion and protection of human rights. In that connection, she drew attention to the various questionnaires annexed to the report, adding that she would be interviewing the poorest people using the questionnaire in annex IV.

4. She also planned to continue the interactive dialogue with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank and noted that those institutions conceded that they had a role to play in overcoming poverty. It was necessary for them to go one step further for she believed that they had a duty to ensure that their decisions did not have an adverse impact on the human rights situation in a country anywhere.

5. Lastly, she drew attention to the worldwide migration of poor people (paras. 14 and 15), noting that it would require action on two fronts, namely, to promote economic growth worldwide and to combat racism. Rejection of the poor was worse when the poor were of another race. The forthcoming World Conference would also contribute therefore to the fight against poverty.

6. Mr. AMIN (Malaysia) said that, to ensure that economic, social and cultural rights were effectively enjoyed, it was necessary to examine why they were violated; to recognize the need for a multidisciplinary approach and to create an enabling environment by addressing the impact of globalization on the full enjoyment of human rights. His Government was concerned that

most developing countries had yet to reap the benefits of globalization. Accordingly, it would soon be hosting in Kuala Lumpur a workshop on globalization and its impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights.

7. Recognizing that economic growth, resource mobilization and poverty eradication were essential to the realization of all human rights, his Government had focused in its national development plan, on striking a balance between economic growth and equity; ensuring a balanced development of the major sectors of the economy and developing a progressive society in which all citizens enjoyed greater material welfare while at the same time fostering spiritual values and a sense of national pride.

8. While each State bore primary responsibility for ensuring that its citizens enjoy their human rights, it was equally important for the international community to create a supportive environment.

9. Mr. AKRAM (Pakistan) said that efforts to promote economic, social and cultural rights were of critical importance in the current context of globalization. His country's approach to the issue might be useful in developing approaches at the national level. It focused on improving governance by enhancing transparency and reducing corruption; reducing poverty inter alia through structural reforms and investment in human capital, particularly through primary education and basic health; reducing the external debt burden; promoting employment generation programmes in low income areas and establishing micro-credit facilities to improve access of poor people, especially women, to credit.

10. The current asymmetrical evolution of global society was a result of persistent discrimination against developing countries as evidenced by the fact that, despite abundant food supplies, malnutrition in poor regions of the world was increasing; that technologies such as the Internet had increased the flow of cross-border knowledge but half the world's population had never even made a telephone call; that life-prolonging medicine for persons with HIV/AIDS existed but those most affected could not afford them; and that, although work existed in the affluent regions, the poor could not get work because of barriers to the movement of persons.

11. Solving global poverty required global efforts, to redress the global inequality in the international trading system, promote global financial stability and open the markets of rich countries to the agricultural produce, manufactured goods and services of developing countries and provide adequate funding through official development assistance (ODA), debt reduction and write-off and the creation of new mechanisms to ensure investment in the developing countries.

12. Mr. SABHARWAL (India) agreed with the Special Rapporteur on the right to education that education was the key to development and that the right to education was the key to the enjoyment of many other human rights. His Government had undertaken a campaign to achieve the goal of universal elementary education in stages, the initial targets being to have all children attending school by the year 2003 and to have all children assured of eight years of schooling by 2010.

13. Turning to the report of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing (E/CN.4/2001/51), he noted that the only critical comments related to two judgements of the Indian courts. While he had taken note of the comments, which were in line with those of other critics, he had no reason to believe that the critics had greater wisdom than the institutions entitled to take decisions on such matters.

14. Mr. NGOUBEYOU (Cameroon) said that, in promoting and implementing the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, his Government was establishing a legal framework and adopting a pragmatic approach. In that regard, it had been concentrating on preserving peace, security and stability, consolidating democracy and the rule of law; promoting and protecting human rights and adopting and implementing its poverty reduction strategy, health and education policies, food and food security plans, employment and urban policies as well as its governance and anti-corruption programme.

15. The promotion of human dignity lay at the heart of his Government's concerns. There had been a considerable increase in the number of children attending school, largely as a result of the decision to make primary education free of charge. The Government had taken steps to ensure that the education was of high quality and to improve teachers' salaries, develop curricula and introduce human rights education. A number of health centres had been set up, and there was a central body to provide essential drugs. Unemployment, though still high, was falling with the upturn in growth. Minorities were well protected under the Constitution and laws of Cameroon, as well as by the electoral system.

16. His Government had taken steps to encourage the recruitment of women at all levels in the State apparatus and to encourage the creation and development of community movements. The right to work, as well as trade union activity, social security and health insurance were practical realities. Civil service salaries had been increased by 30 per cent. Protection of the family, mothers and children, and the participation in society of the handicapped, were assured. As for polygamy, its legal authorization derived from African culture, civilization, tradition and customary law.

17. The areas of particular concern to his Government were the right to an adequate standard of living, increasing wages, poverty reduction measures for the most vulnerable sectors of the population, improving housing and health and hygiene in prisons, the right to physical and mental health, the campaign against AIDS and developing a broad-based pharmaceuticals policy through the provision of essential drugs.

18. Mr. AL-NIMA (Observer for Iraq) said that the sanctions against his country had produced human suffering that would last for generations to come and were in flagrant violation of the international human rights instruments. The sanctions, which amounted to genocide, had political motives and were designed to hinder the process of development in Iraq. There was no longer any justification for them, and they were being used by the United States of America and the United Kingdom as a weapon. Child mortality in Iraq had broken all records as a result of them, and their cumulative consequences had eaten into the social fabric of Iraq, which currently had high levels of youth unemployment and delinquency. The Commission should do whatever it could to mitigate their consequences.

19. Dr. TARANTOLA (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that the potential of human rights to contribute to the practice of public health was being increasingly understood by policy makers and practitioners alike. WHO had provided technical input to the preparation of general comment No. 14 on the right to the highest attainable standard of health adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 2000, and had itself been developing a health and human rights strategy which examined ways in which health and human rights issues could feature within WHO's work in supporting its member States and responding to their peoples' health needs.

20. Experience of helping Governments, communities and affected people in responding to HIV/AIDS had shown the importance of ensuring that health challenges were addressed in ways that safeguarded human rights, but there were other linkages also between health and human rights. Lack of attention to and violations of human rights could have direct and serious consequences for people's health, as in the case of female genital mutilation or systematic discrimination on the basis of sex and gender roles. Conversely, the vulnerability to and the impact of ill health could be reduced by taking steps to respect, protect and fulfil human rights.

21. WHO focused on illnesses which disproportionately affected the most vulnerable population groups, and that inevitably brought the Organization into the human rights discourse. Such groups included those who were disenfranchised and as a result denied access to essential health care, and prisoners, who were disproportionately affected by tuberculosis and whose access to health care was often limited.

22. The fact that more than 80 per cent of smokers began smoking before they were 18 led one to wonder whether the core guiding principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were being applied in all State action. Malaria killed 3,000 children every day in situations where an individual's right to a healthy environment was not fulfilled, and yet there had been an inadequate response from the economically affluent countries to the call from Africa's Heads of State in April 2000 for international solidarity in the effort to roll back malaria in Africa.

23. Lastly, mental health was a much neglected area of which the human rights dimension was an integral component. Discrimination, stigma and social exclusion might be both a cause and a consequence of mental disorders, and it was shameful to witness the continuing neglect and mistreatment of some people in mental institutions. A human rights approach centring on the human dignity of the individual was the key to addressing other public health challenges posed by mental health.

24. The interdependence and indivisibility of all human rights prompted the need for more attention to be given to economic, social and cultural rights, and especially the right to health. It should be a priority for the entire international community. The main obstacle was poverty, which required resources and political will, as well as courage and vision.

25. Mr. SFEIR-YOUNIS (World Bank) said he welcomed the endeavours of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing, even if the Bank adopted different positions from him on certain issues. One of the most important fundamental issues in respect of the right to education was the question of school fees in primary education. That was an issue that had to be discussed, particularly with countries that did not have sufficient resources. In that connection,

the policies and programmes of all sectors of the economy and not just the education sector had to be analysed. Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) was a very recent process of country reporting, and lessons were still being learned from it. The integration of human rights into that process was a country decision and, if a country decided to adopt a humans rights approach to the elimination of poverty, the Bank would fully support that decision.

26. Mr. HUSSEIN (Observer for Egypt) said that the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights was a basic prerequisite and safeguard for the enjoyment of civil and political rights. Human rights were indivisible, and if economic, social and cultural rights were not guaranteed, the enjoyment of all rights would be impeded.

27. In spite of its full support for the efforts of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, his Government had expressed reservations about the idea of adopting an optional protocol to the Covenant. The draft optional protocol did not cover the responsibilities of non-governmental economic parties, even though some of them had the capacities for exceeding those of many developing countries.

28. Ms. RIVERA RAMÍREZ (Observer for Honduras) said that her Government concentrated its social rights programmes in terms of education, health and food on families living in extreme poverty and on the provision of medical services in remote rural areas. Honduras had suffered considerable economic and environmental damage as a result of natural disasters in recent years, and there was an indissoluble link between development, environmental sustainability and the risks of disasters.

29. National efforts were not sufficient on their own, and there was a need for international cooperation in terms of know-how, technology and financing. Regional and national efforts in Central America should be backed up by international solidarity, otherwise the vicious circle of unsatisfied demands would create political instability and the conditions for development would deteriorate. External debt continued to be a serious impediment to the achievement of economic, social and cultural development. The open-ended working group on structural adjustment programmes and economic, social and cultural rights should continue its consideration of the world economic situation, in particular the repercussion of commercial, financial and monetary practices on employment and poverty. The international financial institutions should take full account of the political and social situation of the heavily indebted developing countries.

30. Honduras would shortly be submitting its initial report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and that report would give a detailed account of the current situation in the country, including the impact of Hurricane Mitch, which still had major consequences for the country's human development.

31. Mr. MEJÍA SOLÍS (Observer for Nicaragua) said that his country had made significant progress in implementing the provisions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, with particular reference to the promotion and protection of the human rights of the indigenous peoples, women, children and

the elderly. His Government had adopted a national strategy to overcome poverty, providing basic education, health, clean drinking water and food in the 60 municipalities with the highest levels of extreme poverty. Better coordination had been achieved between the central and local authorities and civil society.

32. The Government's programme to combat malnutrition in children covered more than 20,000 children in community child-care centres, and mortality rates among the under-fives had been significantly reduced. The national education strategy was a benchmark for defining the goals of the national plan of educational development which further decentralized the administration, increased teachers' salaries and modernized the functioning of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport. A law had been passed on the promotion of human rights and the teaching of the political constitution for the purpose of improving the general understanding among citizens of their rights and of the national and international mechanisms that existed to protect them. The Government was also concentrating its efforts on strengthening macroeconomic adjustment and structural reforms.

33. Mr. ERGUDEN (United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat) said that, in most cities in developing countries, more than half the population lived in informal settlements with no security of tenure and in life- and health-threatening conditions. The poorest of the poor were the homeless, estimated at about 100 million, an increasing proportion of whom were women and children. There was an annual need for some 35 million units of housing in the urban areas of developing countries alone to meet the requirements of the homeless and newly formed households and to replace dilapidated dwellings. That was equivalent to about 95,000 housing units per day.

34. Many Governments had revised their housing policies to include the human rights dimension and the Second United Nations Conference on Human Settlements (Habitat II) had developed a framework in which human settlements development was linked to the process of realizing human rights in general and housing rights in particular. The fact that Governments were committed to the right to adequate housing did not in any way imply that they were obliged to provide free housing for all their citizens. They did, however, have the responsibility of facilitating an enabling environment where the potential and capacity of households were supported.

35. Increased housing production should run parallel with actions focusing on the human rights aspects of housing development, such as security of tenure and residential stability, promoting access to housing resources, combating homelessness, preventing forced evictions and discrimination in the housing sector proving access to remedies where rights were violated and the elimination of gender inequalities. Habitat and the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) were currently preparing a joint programme focusing on practical areas of the process of realizing housing rights. Habitat's two global campaigns on Urban Governance and Secure Tenure and the Cities Alliance initiative developed jointly by Habitat and the World Bank, could make a significant contribution to the realization of housing rights.

36. Women's equal right to the ownership and control of land and property were fundamental areas of concern. Habitat would welcome the adoption of a strengthened resolution on women's housing rights at the Commission's current session. It also supported the mandate and activities of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing. His work was complementary to the United Nations Housing Rights Programme.

37. Mr. MASUKU (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)) said that the World Food Summit had adopted the ambitious yet realizable goal of halving the number of undernourished people in the world by 2015. It had reaffirmed the right of everyone to adequate food and the fundamental right to freedom from hunger.

38. While the normative content of those rights and the nature of State obligations had been largely clarified, much remained to be done on implementation at the national level. The third Consultation on the Right to Adequate Food, gave valuable advice on how States could operationalize the right to adequate food through framework legislation, strong food-security policies and attention to food rights in the context of poverty alleviation programmes. His Organization had been pleased to establish contact with the new Special Rapporteur on the right to food and hoped that he would attend the relevant FAO meetings.

39. FAO statistics suggested that there were fewer undernourished people than some years previously. The resources and technology existed to ensure that no one should be hungry: world food production was sufficient to feed everyone and was expected to remain so for the foreseeable future. Progress in increasing access to adequate food, however, was slower than it should be if the target of reducing the number of undernourished people by 2015 was to be achieved.

40. A global forum called World Food Summit: Five Years Later would provide an opportunity to take stock of achievements and to restate commitments to actions enabling countries to meet the goal of the Summit. The forum would be preceded by a series of consultations on the themes of fostering the political will to fight hunger and mobilizing the necessary resources. Prominence would be given to human rights issues. He also drew attention to a strategy for concerted government and United Nations agency action, entitled "The elimination of food insecurity in the Horn of Africa".

41. Mr. ANOSHKO (Observer for Belarus) said that his Government was determined to provide full respect for fundamental human rights and freedoms while preserving social stability. Any imbalance in realizing economic, social and cultural rights could have disastrous consequences. It therefore focused on the gradual planned reform of economic, social and cultural institutions. It had a significant amount of experience in dealing with unemployment, poverty and falling living standards.

42. His Government was endeavouring to raise the standard of living and the quality of life by giving all able-bodied persons the opportunity to provide for themselves and their families, while providing social protection for those unable to work. An effective social policy was

crucial. A country's future depended on its young people and the necessary legislation had been put in place to implement a youth policy. Budgetary resources had been allocated for a youth programme and a training and qualification system for working with young people was being elaborated.

43. During the transition period, Belarus had generally managed to maintain its former cultural achievements. His Government had established priorities and principles for its long-term cultural programme based on the preservation of the country's historical and cultural heritage and the development of national cultural traditions. The main aim of the programme was to develop the deepest sources and traditions of national culture, with due regard for the fact that it had been preserved and developed not by those at the top of Belarusian society, who had been deprived of their Belarusianness by historical circumstances, but by the common people, particularly in the rural areas.

44. Mr. HAN Sung Ii (Observer for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that a life lived in dignity was inconceivable without such political rights as the right to elect or be elected, as well as economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to food and shelter. It was no exaggeration to say that human rights violations at the national and international levels were largely due to social and economic inequality. Over 1 billion people were threatened by extreme poverty, 40,000 children died of hunger and curable diseases every day, 1.5 billion people were illiterate and there were still 15 million refugees around the world. The situation was deteriorating, with resulting antagonism between individuals and armed conflict between States. Surprisingly some people considered that economic, social and cultural rights were outside the normal range of human rights and should be realized only as the economic situation improved.

45. Worse still, some Governments, in order to justify their position that absolute priority should be given to civil and political rights, groundlessly accused others of using economic, social and cultural rights as a cover for the abuse of political rights. Such an approach had a negative impact on worldwide efforts to promote and protect human rights, since they were motivated by political interest. In particular, the gap between the developing and the developed countries in the exercise of economic, social and cultural rights was widening owing to the negative effects of globalization, unilateral economic sanctions and blockades. The Commission should contribute to the realization of such rights by discussing and adopting practical methods for establishing a just and equitable international economic order.

46. Mr. VAEZ MAHDAVI (Observer for the Islamic Republic of Iran) said that, through its First and Second Development Plans, his Government had implemented programmes to improve the social and cultural rights of its people in the fields of education, health, food security and the fight against narcotic drugs. In particular, the Government attached great importance to the issue of education. The structural reforms under the First Development Plan had been particularly supportive of primary and secondary education. The number of primary schools was rising by nearly 2 per cent a year. There had been a remarkable increase in the female literacy rate since the revolution and women had also made great progress in secondary education. The Second Development Plan had focused on balancing the gender distribution of students in the poorer regions and encouraging girls to attend school.

47. The Special Rapporteur on the right to food had identified seven major economic obstacles to the realization of that right. The international community should concentrate on the removal of those obstacles, which could not be done unless the international economic climate was favourable. His Government considered food security to be a basic priority and was, indeed, obliged by the Constitution to take the measures necessary to provide such security. Over the past 20 years, considerable progress had been made in that regard.

48. Lastly, one of the obstacles facing the developing countries in the implementation of their economic, social and cultural rights was the problem of foreign debt. They should be helped and supported.

49. Mr. VIGNY (Observer for Switzerland) said that the report by the Special Rapporteur on the right to food (E/CN.4/2001/53) was based on the operational approach, calling on all actors in society to take responsibility for ensuring the right to food. It emphasized the fact that the right to food could not be considered separately from efforts to reduce poverty in general. It also highlighted the issue of the internal coherence of the institutions of the United Nations system. In that connection, it should have paid more attention to the views expressed by the World Trade Organization (WTO), the IMF and the World Bank. Similarly, it could have devoted some space to the work of the International Labour Organization (ILO) in promoting decent work, since that too was connected with the right to food. His delegation had some reservations about paragraph 73, which seemed to call into question the WTO Trade-Related Aspects of Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) agreements.

50. Human rights and development cooperation were closely linked in his Government's policy, since sustainable human development could take place only if human rights were respected. Any discussion of a given right should therefore extend to an analysis of the obstacles preventing its enjoyment in any given country. In that context, the report could have contained a more detailed study of the foreign debt issue, given that many developed countries had taken specific steps in that regard. A discussion of how such measures accorded with those recommended by the international financial institutions, particularly with regard to the heavily-indebted poor countries (HIPC) initiative would also have been useful.

51. A lack of access to sufficient food could lead to serious social disorder. The report should have developed that point. To the seven economic obstacles the Special Rapporteur had identified should be added environment policy, which could be crucial in the implementation of the right to food. Chapter III, on domestic legislation, should be expanded to cover domestic constitutional standards. Lastly, although his delegation largely supported the Special Rapporteur's conclusions and recommendations, it thought that the time for public subsidies was past in the era of globalization.

52. Archbishop MARTIN (Observer for the Holy See) said that investment in human capacity was a prerequisite for economic development and essential to the recognition of the dignity of all persons. Indeed, economic, social and cultural rights and human rights education had in recent years acquired a new significance in development policy. Poverty could no longer be defined merely as a lack of income, linked as it was to the ability of people to realize in full their God-given capacities. A multidimensional approach to poverty eradication was thus required. It involved the strengthening of social and judicial infrastructures, not only to protect

market functioning, but also to safeguard the human rights of all persons, especially the marginalized. The vision of a human person-based economic policy opened up new areas of dialogue between economic and human rights communities. Furthermore, in order to ensure greater sustainability of the fight against poverty, civil society should be involved more fully in the Poverty Reduction Strategies.

53. Mr. SCHLEIFFER (World Food Programme (WFP)) said that, in a world of adequate food supplies, hunger was an outrage and a violation of human dignity. In 2000, his organization had provided food aid to 83 million people in 83 countries. Its people-centred approach placed the interests of food-insecure and vulnerable people first, and was aimed at creating an enabling environment for human rights. The provision of food aid was a dangerous task, however. Over the past decade, 27 staff members of WFP had been killed.

54. States' obligations were outlined in the World Food Summit Plan of Action. In particular, Governments must create an enabling economic and political environment to ensure food security for those within their borders. WFP could provide assistance to that end. In particular, it was committed to ensuring long-term solutions. It had become a major buyer of food commodities in the world market, thereby strengthening the position of domestic food producers. Its programmes stressed adequate access to food, as well as non-discrimination, participation, equality and empowerment for all groups, including women and the internally displaced. A recent contribution by a major donor would allow its school-feeding programme to be expanded.

55. International organizations could play a facilitating role in achieving food and nutrition targets and act as providers in emergencies. For WFP, that might include working with States in: identifying all vulnerable groups without discrimination; supporting data collection on food security indicators; understanding the causes of vulnerability and of barriers to food security; supporting local food purchases and distribution mechanisms; supporting production in marginalized areas; supporting food production and processing; and acting on behalf of persons unable to realize their basic rights.

56. The right to food was not about a right to receive food aid, but about continuous physical and economic access to adequate food, or the possession of adequate resources for its procurement. WFP was working with its partners to ensure that food access was expanded to all population groups in ways that safeguarded human dignity and promoted self-reliance.

57. Mr. VIKIS (Observer for Cyprus) said that Turkey had been engaged in the systematic destruction of the cultural heritage of Cyprus for 27 years, through its subordinate local administration in northern Cyprus. Virtually all the registered Greek Orthodox churches and monasteries had been desecrated. Graveyards had been vandalized, museums plundered and archaeological sites destroyed. Cypriot antiquities were being sold on the international black market. Such destruction was equivalent to "an act of genocide", the "victims" being the cultural treasures of countless generations. Turkey evidently belonged to the very small group of countries that had no respect for other cultures.

58. Mr. VAN DER HEIJDEN (Observer for the Netherlands) said that poverty made the right to an adequate standard of living illusory for many people. Although many people had in recent decades witnessed an improvement in their living conditions, the economic and social rights of the world's neediest had increasingly been undermined. It had been a while before his own Government had fully appreciated the relationship between development assistance and human rights but it had come to understand that sustainable development not only combined economic development, social development and environmental protection, but also included full respect for human rights and democratic institutions.

59. In view of the changing role of States, his delegation supported an approach to human rights which took account of two elements: State responsibility for upholding human rights, and partnerships at the international level. In that connection, his Government was prepared to provide financial assistance to Governments that had demonstrated a commitment to good governance. Any strengthening of international monitoring of the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights would be welcome. The Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights should be given the opportunity to submit recommendations to the Commission concerning the draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights and the results of the workshop on the justiciability of economic, social and cultural rights.

60. Ms. SAYEGH (General Arab Women Federation), speaking also on behalf of All India Women's Conference, Women's Federation for World Peace International, World Information Transfer, World Movement of Mothers, World Peace Council, World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA), and Voice of Women for Peace, said that the devastating economic and social impact of the sanctions on Iraq had been well documented. The sanctions, however, continued to be imposed while the daily bombardments by the United States of America and the United Kingdom brought further casualties and destruction to infrastructure and land. World public opinion was finally awakening to the suffering being caused to the entire population of Iraq in the name of "the people of the United Nations".

61. While the Iraqis were making a valiant effort to cope with their situation, they did not have the means to stem the economic collapse of their country, or the rising unemployment and massive inflation. In 1989, one Iraqi dinar had been worth US$ 3.20, US$ 1 was currently equivalent to ID 7,000, with the average monthly salary being equivalent to US$ 5. The Iraqi Government had introduced a rationing system - costing an annual US$ 1.2 billion - to provide the most basic necessities to 20 million people. That was sufficient to keep the population alive, but not to ensure its healthy development. The Commission should thus urge the Security Council to lift the sanctions against Iraq without delay.

62. With regard to the oil-for-food programme, which had been heralded as a great humanitarian gesture by the United Nations, the organizations she represented were scandalized by the manner in which Iraq's oil revenues were being distributed by the United Nations Compensation Commission (UNCC). According to a newspaper report, US$ 15.9 billion had been awarded in a single payment to a handful of companies including Kuwait Petroleum Corporation. That was twice the amount received by the Iraqi Government between 1996 and 2000 to feed and care for its population. In addition, an annual US$ 50 million were deducted from Iraqi exports to fund the UNCC Secretariat and its Commissioners. The

Government of Iraq had no right of appeal against any UNCC decision. Moreover, the shipment to Iraq of foodstuffs and medical and educational materials remained blocked because of the failure of the relevant Security Council Committee to authorize their clearance for shipment.

63. The Secretary-General had stated that the worsening of the humanitarian crisis in Iraq was an "unintended consequence" of the sanctions. The devastating effects of the sanctions could no longer be considered to be unintended, since they had been known for 10 years. The only conclusion was that the crisis was intended ....

64. The CHAIRMAN said that the speaker had exceeded her allocated time by two minutes.

65. Mr. PARY (Indian Movement "Tupaj Amaru") said that globalization had deprived Governments of their economic function in planning social production. That role had been taken over by the transnational corporations in accordance with a neo-liberal approach imposed on the developing countries by the World Bank and IMF. Through those corporations, international investors had reintroduced a neo-colonial pattern to North/South relations. Ironically, while the transnational corporations were squeezing the wealth out of the poor countries, leaving their traditional economies in ruins and contaminating their air and water, the rich countries were closing their borders to the free movement of people.

66. As had been made clear at a recent social forum, there was a growing movement among peoples of African descent and indigenous peoples against neo-liberal policies, which led to a chaotic spiral in which more and more was produced and consumed ... without ultimate satisfaction, the focus being on quantity not quality. Experience showed, however, that economic growth based on the destruction of natural resources simply increased the gap between the rich and the poor. If the current patterns persisted, present and future generations would be condemned to material and moral wretchedness.

67. World Bank statistics showed that 56 per cent of the world population lived in poverty; 1.2 billion living on less than US$ 1 a day and 2.8 billion more on less than US$ 2 a day. Indigenous peoples constituted over 80 per cent of the rural poor in the developing countries and 61 per cent in the case of Latin America and the Caribbean. The poor deplored the lack of political will in the rich countries to eradicate poverty. The current international economic order was profoundly unjust, completely unsustainable and morally indefensible. The wealth of the three richest people in the world was greater than the gross domestic product (GDP) of 48 developing countries.

68. Ms. AL TABAL (North South XXI) said that, for the past six months, many Palestinians had been prevented from reaching their places of employment or had lost income; indeed, 30 per cent of the population of the Gaza Strip relied on income generated by work in Israel. Since the start of the intifada, the number of Palestinians working in Israel had been reduced to 20,000. Daily direct losses of income due to lost work were estimated at US$ 2.7 million.

69. In view of the sustained nature of the violation of the human rights of the Palestinians: the Commission should request the Security Council to establish an international protection force; call on the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to take action, and urge the General Assembly to adopt economic sanctions and other measures, such as the suspension of Israel's membership of the Organization, to oblige Israel to comply with United Nations resolutions. In addition, a human rights monitoring force should be sent to the occupied territories and a draft optional protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights should be developed.

Statements in exercise of the right to reply

70. Mr. ISCAN (Observer for Turkey) said that the preposterous allegations by the representative of Cyprus hardly merited a response. Turkey was not responsible for the actions of the authorities in Northern Cyprus. However, since the latter was not represented in the Commission, his delegation would take it upon itself to respond to some of the more outrageous claims. The Turkish presence in Cyprus did not amount to an occupation, as already explained. The allegations of looting were baseless, having been refuted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Council of Europe and the World Council of Churches. It was the Greek Cypriot side that had always tried to cleanse the island of its ethnic Turkish population and eradicate its heritage, including 107 mosques and Islamic sites.

71. Mr. VIKIS (Observer for Cyprus) said that Turkey had been condemned by the European Court of Human Rights and in United Nations resolutions for its massive violations of human rights. The parliaments of many countries had noted Turkey's acts of genocide in Cyprus, as well as its poor human rights record at home. The Turkish delegation was engaged in a gross distortion of reality. All but a few churches and mosques had been looted and vandalized by Turkish forces, as he had explained. Turkey must halt its destruction of the island's cultural heritage.

72. Mr. ISCAN (Observer for Turkey) asked how the representative of a community that had attempted to exterminate ethnic Turks dared to make fictitious allegations of genocide.

73. Mr. VIKIS (Observer for Cyprus) said that he had merely observed that the parliaments of many countries had noted Turkey's acts of genocide - a fact that the previous speaker could hardly deny.

The meeting rose at 6.10 p.m.